WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A computer-based method for collecting dependency data, the method including:

collecting configuration data describing a first networked resource via a software agent executing on the first networked resource;

selecting dependency data from the configuration data, the dependency data specifying a dependency relationship between the first networked resource and a second networked resource; and

populating a repository with the dependency data.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the repository is stored on the first networked resource.

3. The method of claim 2, further including:

collecting dependency data from a plurality of networked resources including the first networked resource; and

storing the dependency data in a repository centralized within a distributed systems management environment.

4. A computer-based method for communicating dependency data, including:

gathering dependency data on a managed device via an agent on the managed device; and

offering access to a table that includes the dependency data, the access using a dependency interface for a distributed systems management protocol on the agent.

5. The method of claim 4, where the distributed systems management protocol is an open standard.

6. The method of claim 4, where the distributed systems management protocol is SNMP.

7. The method of claim 5, wherein offering access includes a distributed systems management software application communicating across a network with the agent using

the distributed systems management protocol.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein the agent communicates with a distributed systems management software application using the distributed systems management protocol to raise a trap based on the dependency data.

9. A computer-based method for distributed systems management, including:

monitoring a first managed device with a first agent, where the first agent gathers dependency data describing a dependency relationship between the first managed device and a second device; and

starting a second agent to monitor the second device based on the dependency data.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein the first managed device is managed by a distributed systems management software application and the second device is also managed by the distributed systems management software application at the time the dependency data is gathered.

11. The method of claim 9, wherein the first managed device is managed by a distributed systems management software application and the second device is not being managed by the distributed systems management software application at the time the dependency data is gathered.

12. A computer-based method for formatting dependency information for display, including:

providing a display area having a linear border;

selecting a root managed device to display at a root distance from the border; and

displaying a non-root managed device in a dependency relationship with the root managed device, where the dependency relationship has a length of at least one, the displaying including indenting the representation of the non-root managed device a predetermined distance away from the border, greater than the root distance and dependent upon the length.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein displaying further includes displaying a plurality of non-root managed devices in a tabular layout ordered according to a breadth-first search of devices joined by direct dependency relationships, the search beginning with the root managed device.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the breadth-first search is constrained to a predetermined depth.

15. The method of claim 12, wherein displaying further includes displaying a plurality of non-root managed devices in a tabular layout ordered according to a depth-first search of devices joined by direct dependency relationships, the search beginning with the root managed device.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein the depth-first search is constrained to a predetermined depth.

17. The method of claim 12, wherein the predetermined distance for any such non-root managed device in the display area is determined by multiplying the length times a base predetermined distance.

18. A computer-based method for collecting dependency data, the method including:

gathering a plurality of dependency data on a plurality of networked resources via a plurality of software agents, such that a software agent runs on each networked resource in the plurality of networked resources, the dependency data including data specifying a dependency relationship between a first networked resource and a second networked resource in the plurality of networked resources; and

adding a dependency entry to a central repository managed by a manager application, the dependency entry describing the dependency relationship.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein the first networked resource is in a plurality of network resources managed by the manager application.

20. The method of claim 19, wherein after the gathering of the data specifying the dependency relationship and before the adding of the dependency entry to the central repository, the second networked resource is not in the plurality of network resources managed by the manager application.

21. The method of claim 20, wherein before the gathering of the data specifying the dependency relationship, the second networked resource is in the plurality of network resources managed by the manager application.

22. The method of claim 18, wherein manager application offers a client application access to the central repository, the access using a distributed systems management protocol.

23. The method of claim 22, wherein the distributed systems management protocol is SNMP.

24. An article comprising a machine-readable storage medium that stores executable instructions to collect dependency data, the instructions causing a machine to:

collect configuration data describing a first networked resource via a software agent executing on the first networked resource;

select dependency data from the configuration data, the dependency data specifying a dependency relationship between the first networked resource and a second networked resource; and

populate a repository with the dependency data.

25. The article of claim 24, wherein the repository is stored on the first networked resource.

26. The article of claim 25, further including instructions causing the machine to:

collect dependency data from a plurality of networked resources including the first networked resource; and

store the dependency data in a repository centralized within a distributed systems management environment.

27. An article comprising a machine-readable storage medium that stores executable instructions to communicate dependency data, the instructions causing a machine to:

gather dependency data on a managed device via an agent on the managed device; and

offer access to a table that includes the dependency data, the access using a dependency interface for a distributed systems management protocol on the agent.

28. An article comprising a machine-readable storage medium that stores executable instructions to manage distributed systems, the instructions causing a machine to:

monitor a first managed device with a first agent, where the first agent gathers dependency data describing a dependency relationship between the first managed device and a second device; and

start a second agent to monitor the second device based on the dependency data.

29. An article comprising a machine-readable storage medium that stores executable instructions to format dependency information for display, the instructions causing a machine to:

provide a display area having a linear border;

select a root managed device to display at a root distance from the border; and

display a non-root managed device in a dependency relationship with the root managed device, where the dependency relationship has a length of at least one, the displaying including indenting the representation of the non-root managed device a predetermined distance away from the border, greater than the root distance and dependent upon the length.

30. The article of claim 29, wherein the instructions causing a machine to display further include displaying a plurality of non-root managed devices in a tabular layout ordered according to a breadth-first search of devices joined by direct dependency relationships,

the search beginning with the root managed device.

31. The article of claim 29, wherein the instructions causing a machine to display further include displaying a plurality of non-root managed devices in a tabular layout ordered according to a depth-first search of devices joined by direct dependency relationships, the search beginning with the root managed device.